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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 005310

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [SNAR](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KJUS](#) [CO](#) [AUC](#)

SUBJECT: DON BERNA TURNS HIMSELF IN

REF: BOGOTA 05093

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary: Senior AUC commander Diego Murillo ("Don Berna") turned himself into authorities on May 27 and agreed to demobilize his several thousand paramilitaries. He is being held in a police-controlled confinement area in Cordoba Department, where he will be investigated and tried for the murder of a local Cordoba official. During the incident, two of the other most powerful paramilitary commanders Vicente Castano and Javier Montanez agreed to begin demobilizing their troops. The Peace Commissioner publicly stated that charges against Murillo for other crimes had not been suspended, but that he first had to answer for the murder. Murillo is indicted in the U.S. on drug trafficking charges. President Uribe encouraged the U.S. to issue an extradition request but may choose to condition Murillo's extradition to his failure to comply with the peace process, including whether or not he fully demobilizes all his troops. End summary.

The Deal

2. (SBU) On May 27, senior AUC commander Diego Murillo Bejarano turned himself over to Colombian authorities after President Uribe had ordered his arrest for violating the AUC cease-fire (reftel). Murillo agreed to demobilize the 4,000 or so paramilitaries under his control and answer to the justice system in exchange for being held in a government-controlled confinement area in the rural district of Las Piedras, Cordoba Department -- essentially a type of house arrest.

3. (SBU) On May 31, the police transported Murillo to Las Piedras. The area is under police control with oversight from the National Institute for Prisons (INPEC) and the Peace Commissioner's Office. The GOC has stated that the confinement zone is open to international monitoring. While in the zone, Murillo will be investigated and tried for the murder of a local Cordoba official. The Prosecutor General's office has already sent a team of prosecutors to Cordoba to begin investigating Murillo. Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo said publicly that, while the other charges against Murillo had not been suspended, Murillo would first be tried for the murder.

Demobilizations Planned

4. (SBU) Murillo is one of the most powerful AUC commanders. He exerts heavy control in Medellin, where his bloc, the Heroes of Granada, operates, and also controls several thousand troops elsewhere in the country, including the Pacific Bloc on the coast of Cauca and Valle del Cauca Departments. During the incident, Peace Commissioner Restrepo met with senior paramilitary commanders Vicente Castano and Javier Montanez, who also agreed to begin demobilizing their troops. Restrepo has emphasized that Murillo's arrest brought new life to the peace process and will mark the start of a new round of demobilizations. He reported that the first of Murillo's blocs to demobilize will be the "Heroes of Tolova" in the municipality of Valencia, Cordoba. According to Restrepo, the Centauros Bloc, the Montes de Maria Self-defense Forces, the Pacific Bloc, the Heroes of Granada, the Liberators of the South, and the Self-defense Forces of Meta and Vichada are all scheduled to be demobilized by Murillo, Castano, or Montanez.

Extradition Pending

5. (C) The U.S. issued a provisional arrest warrant for Murillo in July 2004 for drug trafficking and is preparing a formal extradition request. President Uribe encouraged the extradition request. However, he may decide not to extradite Murillo if he complies with demobilization, as Uribe did in the case of Salvatore Mancuso. We have urged in the strongest terms that President Uribe hold Murillo to all his commitments.

